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L E T T E R S

J.S.

EXPLANATORY OF

THE PROPOSAL

THAT THE

PUBLIC BATHS

AND

WASH-HOUSES

IN

GOULSTONE SQUARE,

SHOULD BE

TRANSFERRED TO

THE CITY OF LONDON.

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1855.

No. 1.

LETTER ADDRESSED TO

THE RIGHT HONORABLE THE LORD MAYOR,

BY

JOHN SIMON, ESQ., F.R.S.,

Officer of Health to the City of London.

Upper Grosvenor Street,
March 16, 1855.

My Lord,

I hope I may be excused for troubling your lordship, as head of the Corporation, in reference to a subject which, though it relates to the sanitary interests of the City, does not come within the jurisdiction of that Court which alone I have official opportunities to address; and I trust that your lordship, appreciating the great importance of the subject, may be willing to bring it under notice of the Common Council, in order to its being referred to the consideration of some standing committee of that body.

Your lordship may perhaps remember that, nearly six years ago, the first annual report which I addressed to the Commissioners of Sewers, I suggested the very great advantages which might be conferred on the poorer population of the City by the establishment of Public Baths and Laundries, on a plan which had then lately been adopted in some other parts of London. Objections, however, were raised to any steps being taken by the commission for the furtherance of such establishments, on the ground of their "not coming within the objects for which the rates under the authority of the commission are raised."

I have reason to believe that, since the date referred to, this question has more than once been under consideration of standing committees of the Common Council ; and that, except for hindrances interposed by the project of a Railway Terminus within the City, there would ere now have been erected in the neighbourhood of Holborn Bridge some establishment to supply so urgent a desideratum for at least the western portion of the City.

Meanwhile, my lord, time has elapsed. Public Baths and Laundries have multiplied in the metropolis ; and places far less important than the City of London have long since provided themselves with what we continue grievously to lack.

My lord, every year of an extended sanitary experience has made me feel more deeply that institutions of this kind are necessary for the health and for the civilisation of the poorer classes ; and it has been with extreme regret that I have witnessed, however inevitably, the almost indefinite postponement of so important an object.

An accident of the present day seems to offer a very favourable opportunity for remedying the defect ; and this it is, my lord, which I am now desirous of bringing pointedly under your notice.

Your lordship is probably aware that, in 1844, a number of distinguished and benevolent gentlemen were associated as a " Committee to promote the establishment of Baths and Wash-houses." That, in order to their object, they founded a model institution in Goulston Square ; and that step by step, with frequent experiments, much thought, and constant expenditure of money, they developed this to a pattern which is universally quoted to illustrate with what efficiency and economy such an organization can work.

The original Committee of this institution has long since dwindled to a very small number of acting members,—Sir H. Dukinfield, Mr. W. Hawes, and Mr. J. Bullar ; and for several years these three gentlemen, with a zeal and public spirit for which society must remain their debtor, have continued diligently to superintend every working detail of the establishment.

The Committee at length feel necessitated to withdraw from their responsibility. They have fulfilled the educational object which led them to co-operate. They have made Public Baths and Wash-houses a national institution. By costly experiments and admirable

models, they have fixed, even to the smallest economical details, how such works may best be established and maintained. Having no further motive to remain administrators of the establishment, they are desirous to relinquish the liabilities and labour of their trust.

Now, my lord, this model establishment—most substantially built and in full work, holding 94 baths and 84 laundry stands, capable of supplying 3,000 baths in a day, and having local facilities for future enlargement—this establishment, at present open to purchase, lies close to the eastern boundary of the City.

I would beg your lordship to consider whether any better opportunity is likely to offer for giving to that poorest and most crowded part of our population those great advantages which such establishments are calculated to confer.

The gentlemen whose names I have mentioned would be best able to inform your lordship or any committee that may entertain the question, what in detail are the pecuniary circumstances of their undertaking and on what conditions they would consent to transfer the property ; but I have their authority for stating that whereas the establishment—including an outlay of some thousands in works of an experimental character, cost about £28,000 ; and whereas, even with the advantages of present experience, a building of the same capacity would now for its erection and fittings cost about £23,000 ; the existing establishment could be transferred to the Corporation on their adopting its liabilities, not exceeding £13,000, of which only a small proportion need be paid down.

What may be said both for and against this suggestion, will no doubt occur to your lordship ; and I will only venture to trouble you on one of these considerations. The purchase of that property by the Corporation might be objected to on the ground of its lying on the other side of the City boundary line.

But, my lord, for Baths and Washhouses to do their full service to the city of London, where can they be placed ? In the centre, where land is almost fabulously expensive, no space can be found for them ; and except on the finding of space for a central establishment, it becomes indispensable that there should be two such buildings for the City.

Sooner or later, I dare say, Baths and Washhouses will be established in the neighbourhood of Victoria Street ; but I need

not tell your lordship that while these will be very valuable to persons dwelling in Clerkenwell, no less than to our own population about Smithfield, they will be unfrequented by those who, perhaps, most of all, need them—the squalid inhabitants of courts and alleys a mile away in our Eastern districts. For these crowds it seems quite necessary that such an establishment should stand in their own vicinity ; and I could select no spot more eligible for the purpose than the immediate neighbourhood of Petticoat Lane, close whereto, at the present moment, stands the Goulston Square Model Institution.

Whether such a fabric be on one side of Petticoat Lane, or on the other, will signify next to nothing for the convenience of our population frequenting it ; and, so far as any principle is concerned, I need not remind your lordship that our cattle-market at Islington, our prison at Holloway, and our cemetery at Wanstead (not to mention other cases which are in contemplation). afford sufficient precedent for ~~m~~municipal establishments beyond the municipal boundary.

Indeed, my lord, if at the present time the choice were offered me between two sites for an eastern building of City Baths and Washhouses—one, namely, at the eastern side of Petticoat Lane (where the model institution stands), and another at the western side of the same lane, among our own crowded courts and alleys of Bishopsgate, I should incline to prefer the former. For if it were possible to find on our side of that boundary-line some space that might be purchased for such a purpose, I should greatly regret to see any new building commenced in a locality which, even now, as I have repeatedly urged, is far too densely thronged for the healthy existence of its population.

In conclusion, my lord, I am authorized to say that the gentlemen, whom I have named as forming the working committee of the model establishment, would be glad to confer either with your lordship or with any committee of the Corporation on the subject which, with their concurrence, I have had the honour of bringing under your notice.

I beg to remain, my lord, your obedient Servant,
(Signed) JOHN SIMON.

To the Right Hon. the Lord Mayor, &c.

No. 2.

LETTER ADDRESSED TO

THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES,

BY

JOHN BULLAR, ESQ., BARRISTER AT LAW,

Published in the Times of April 2, 1855.

PUBLIC BATHS AND WASHHOUSES.

Sir,

The Committee for Promoting the Establishment of Baths and Washhouses for the Labouring Classes, having now successfully performed the important duties intrusted to them, find, after mature consideration, that one of two alternatives must speedily be adopted with respect to the model establishment in Aboultstone Square, which is under their special charge.

It must either be transferred to some public body competent to keep it open, such as the Corporation of the City of London—in which case the benefits which it confers on the working classes would be permanently secured—or it must be sold to discharge the mortgage debt upon it and a few other liabilities; in which case this most useful institution would be closed.

To place the public in possession of the facts which would justify either the transfer of the property to the Corporation, on terms very advantageous to them, or its sale for what it would fetch, I venture to ask for a portion of your valuable space.

The Committee have shown, to the satisfaction of the country at large, that cold baths at 1*d.* each, and warm baths at 2*d.* each, and means for washing, drying, and ironing clothes, at from 1*d.* to 2*d.* an hour, can, when united with threepenny and sixpenny baths of a superior class, be supplied to the working classes on remunerative terms. The plans of the model establishment have been largely followed; there being now, in addition to those which have been provided by voluntary efforts, 10 parochial establishments in the metropolis, provided under Sir H. Dukinfield's Act, containing together 625 private baths, 15 plunging baths, and 509 washing places, with drying closets, mangles, and other conveniences. A large number of the towns throughout England have also followed the example. The Corporation of Liverpool have erected three establishments at a cost exceeding £34,000, and are now adding a large plunging bath to one of them, which was not so furnished at first.

The model establishment contains 94 private baths, and 84 washing places, with drying closets, &c., and has given baths and washing accommodation to 201,282 persons during the past year.

The totals of the bathers and washers in the metropolis up to the end of the year 1854 are 5,251,805 bathers, and 1,616,576 washers, by whom it is estimated that the clothes of more than 6,500,000 persons were washed.

Until another instance be shown of a new scheme of benevolence of equal importance being brought forward and carried to as successful an issue within 10 years, I may confidently claim for the Committee the credit (under God's blessing) of an unparalleled success; a credit which is not the less due to their unflinching perseverance through, at times, all but overwhelming difficulties, than as they gladly acknowledge, to the uniform support they have received from the public press.

The Sub-Committee of Works have hitherto carried on the business of the establishment at Goulstone Square; but the number of the acting members of that Sub-Committee, who were among the earliest and most active members of the General Committee, is now very small; and if from death, ill-health, or other

because, their services should be lost, it would be very difficult to induce other persons to devote the time and incur the responsibilities which are required for its management. Besides which, the establishment having long since fully served its purpose as a model, even those who may be termed the founders of these institutions could scarcely be expected to devote valuable time to the mere duties of management, which might be as well performed by any competent official, or to remain permanently responsible for its being kept open.

The Committee think, therefore, that the time has arrived when their establishment ought to be placed on such a footing as that the permanence of its benefits should not be dependent on the exertions or liability of a few individuals.

That the Committee in declining to continue their present responsibilities would not be lightly shrinking from them, will be sufficiently evident from the facts that the contributions of only eight of their members, either in cash or in guarantees, amount to more than £6,000, and that they have given more than 10 years, with the aid of but one very moderately paid assistant secretary, to the work.

An impression having existed that the committee are greatly indebted to the public at large for munificent contributions, and also that the expenditure has been extravagant, I am bound to say that, though there were many generous donors not members of the Committee, yet more than two-thirds of the funds placed at their disposal were raised among themselves—certainly more than the public could have expected them to do, and that the total cost of the establishment, inclusive of its site, and of a large sum necessarily expended on trial works, was only £28,018 11s. 7d.

The Committee had not only to design a novelty, but to test it thoroughly; they had to invent and bring into satisfactory working order an apparatus for which they had no pattern; they had to provide a model for the country at large. They succeeded; and, though they spent on the work not only mere money, but also a large amount of time, labour, and thought, they have only to point to their success for their complete justification.

I may give one instance of the difficulties which the Committee had to overcome—that of combining rapidity with economy in drying, a result essential to the success of the Washhouses, for without the low scale of charges to washers would have been ruinous.

When Louis Philippe was induced, on reading a statement by the Committee, to send over a Commission of Engineers to examine and report on the subject, it was represented to him that, what the Committee said they had done, was “a physical impossibility.” That “physical impossibility” is now contributing to the comfort of millions, yearly.

A comparison of the cost of these works with the cost of the ten parochial establishments will decide the question of extravagant or economical expenditure by the Committee. The total cost of those ten parochial establishments, inclusive of their sites, may be taken (rejecting fractions) at £177,000. Making the large deduction of £20,000 for the 15 plunging baths, 1,134 private baths and washing places were provided for £157,000, being at the rate of £130 each. The 178 private baths and washing places in the model establishment were provided at the rate of about £157 each; but if only 15 per cent. be allowed as expenditure necessarily incidental to a first building and unavoidably incurred on trial works, the full benefit of which was shared by all those parochial establishments, those 178 private baths and washing places were provided at the rate of about £133 each; tallying, as nearly as may be, with the outlay by the parishes.

It is of course impossible to make an exact comparison of the cost of the various buildings, some having more conveniences—such as rooms for attendants—than others; but, viewed with regard to its bathing and washing accommodation, and taking into account the houses attached to it, the model establishment may thus be estimated as being worth fully £23,000 to those who should desire to erect such a building.

The following table shows the progress and success of that establishment from the outset, the working expenses being, of course, exclusive of the assistant secretary's salary, repairs, and committee-room expenses :—

Year.	Number of Bathers.	Number of Washers.	Receipts.	Working Expenses
			£	£
1849	108,082	—	1,406	1,558
1850	137,519	14,702	2,060	1,908
1851	156,311	43,462	2,707	2,353
1852	161,772	44,717	2,896	2,197
1853	156,010	42,589	2,976	2,474
1854	156,158	45,124	3,026	2,829
Totals	875,852	190,594	£15,081	£13,319

The following table shows the working during 1854 of that establishment and the eight parochial establishments then open :—

—	Number of Bathers.	Receipts.			No. of Wash- ers.	Receipts.			Total Receipts.		
		£	s.	d.		£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
The Model'	156,158	2,148	19	5	45,124	887	16	7	3,036	16	0
St. Martin in the Fields	127,581	2,099	16	7	42,780	486	1	4	2,585	17	11
St. Marylebone ..	161,349	2,116	13	7	36,275	486	5	3	2,602	18	10
St. Margaret and St. John, West- minster	103,228	1,283	10	7	62,798	907	14	9	2,191	5	4
Greenwich	58,100	806	9	8	7,254	148	3	0	954	12	8
St. James, West- minster	111,471	1,358	17	1	41,116	788	11	10	2,147	8	11
All Saints, Poplar ..	53,186	654	7	10	10,078	372	14	8	1,027	2	6
St. Giles & Blooms- bury	185,964	2,495	18	0	42,796	1,091	14	1	3,587	12	1
Bermondsey * ..	61,899	743	5	2	4,636	130	3	8	873	8	10
Totals	1,018,936	13,707	17	11	292,857	5,299	5	2	19,007	3	1

* Opened June 19th.

Having thus explained, as briefly as might be, the position of the Committee with reference to their establishment—its cost, both actual and comparative—the necessity which existed for such establishments, as shown by the numbers resorting to them—and, therefore, the soundness of the views which induced the Committee to make great exertions, and no trifling personal sacrifices in time, labour, thought, and money, to complete as perfectly as possible a model building—I will now give some further reasons why the Corporation might properly take a transfer of it, and why this is a fitting time to make the transfer.

1. The establishment is now self-supporting. It pays all its expenses except interest on borrowed capital, which it would also have paid in 1854 but for the high price of coals, and the expenses consequent on Lord Palmerston's Smoke Prevention Act.

2. Its revenue has steadily increased year by year, from £1,406 in 1849, to £3,036 in 1854, and could be much increased by the addition, at a small cost, of a plunging bath.

3. It is in regular working order, wanting only from time to time the necessary making good of wear and tear.

4. It is largely resorted to by inhabitants of the City or persons engaged in the city during the day.

5. The establishment of Baths and Washhouses by the Corporation appears to be a necessary addition to their recent very energetic measures for protecting the health of the citizens.

6. The transfer would now be made on terms most advantageous to the Corporation, whether tested by the actual cost of these works, or by the cost of new works affording the same accommodation for bathers and washers, and constructed with the benefit of all the Committee's experience.

Taking the present cost at £23,000, and the gross liabilities of the Committee at £13,000 (the payment of the greater part of which might be deferred for several years), the Corporation would gain £10,000—thus getting, for little more than half what it would cost them to build such another, an establishment in full work.

7. The Committee and the other subscribers would have the satisfaction of seeing the establishment placed on a secure basis, and their own responsibilities, the pressure of which compels them to bring their affairs to a close, properly terminated.

Considering, then, the present position of the Sub-Committee of Works, the state of the establishment financially and commercially, and the extreme importance of keeping it open for the thousands of citizens who benefit by it, I would beg respectfully to invite the attention of the Corporation of the City of London to the subject, especially as they have already, I understand, resolved that they will provide Baths and Washhouses, and have reserved a site at the western end of the City for the purpose.

Here is an establishment, most substantially built, in full work, paying its working expenses, and with a steadily rising custom, to be had for little more than half of what it would cost them to build such another, and which, if they were to add a plunging bath for summer use, would, like other establishments, become a source of income, and confer still greater benefit upon a class who have at all times received generous consideration from the City authorities.

I may add that the establishment has already an intimate connexion with the Corporation, for it was resolved on at a meeting at the Mansion House, at which the then Lord Mayor presided and the present Lord Mayor assisted, that its foundation stone was laid by another Lord Mayor, that among its early advocates

and supporters were Aldermen and Common Councilmen, and that it has received the sanction of the Corporation at large in the form of grants to the amount of £305.

The Committee would submit this proposal to the consideration of the Corporation as being both men of business and actuated by a benevolent regard for the welfare of a multitude of their poorer fellow-citizens in the eastern portion of the City.

By accepting the transfer the Corporation would not only save largely in capital, but would also take an important step towards the completion of those sanitary arrangements which already reflect on them so much credit, and by which they have attained a highly distinguishing pre-eminence among our municipal bodies.

I am, Sir, your obedient Servant,
JOHN BULLAR, Hon. Sec.

Temple, March 20, 1855.

LONDON :

E. A. COURT, PRINTER, 26, BROOKE STREET, HOLBORN.



